

JEHOVAH'S VALUATION OF HIS PEOPLE

NO. 2167

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior:
I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."
Isaiah 43:3.*

IN this chapter the Lord comforts His people. By His divine foresight He perceives that there are great and varied trials a little way ahead and therefore He prepares them for the ordeal. They are to go through rushing waters and flaming fires and He kindly bids them not to be afraid. How often in God's word do we read those tender, gracious words, "Fear not"? Should not the trembling ones listen to the voice of their God and obey it when He says to them, "Fear not"? It is not right for you who fear God to fear anything else. Once brought to know the Lord, what can harm you? Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, what danger need you dread? No, rather, be of good comfort and press forward with peaceful confidence though floods and flames await you.

To encourage His people to rise superior to their fears, the gracious God goes on to issue matchless promises; "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." present good; "I will be with you." Absent danger; "they shall not overflow you." God stays His people's hearts by His own promises. In proportion to their faith those promises lift them up. If you do not believe the promise, you shall not be established by it. But if, with childlike confidence, you accept every word of God as true, then His word shall be to you the joy of your heart and the delight of your spirit; and you shall be a stranger to fear.

The Lord proceeds, after giving those promises, to set before them what He Himself is and what He has done for them and what they are to Him. He is speaking, of course, to Israel; and He says of Israel, His chosen nation; "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." What cause for fear now remains? All believers are of the true Israel. Abraham was the father of the faithful. The faithful, or the believing, are, therefore, Abraham's seed according to the promise. The seed was not after the flesh, else would the children of Ishmael have been the heirs of the covenant. But the true seed was born according to promise and in the power of God, for Isaac was born when his parents were old, by faith in the power of God. Isaac was not the child of the flesh, but he was born according to promise, so that we who are not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, by His Spirit and according to the divine promise, are the true children of Abraham. We are the *spiritual* Israel.

Though after the flesh Abraham is ignorant of us, and Sarah acknowledge us not, yet we are the true seed of him who was the father of believers. The literal Israel was the type of those chosen and favored ones who by faith are born-again according to promise. To these heirs according to promise the Lord says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." I am sure I shall not be straining the passage if I now apply it wholly to the chosen of God. But if any of you feel staggered at my use of that term, I would remind you that the chosen of God are made known by their believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the sure evidence of election. If, therefore, you are a believer in Christ, you are of the true Israel. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." And being born of God, you are of the family of His love; you are heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. If you are not believers in Him, what can I preach to you that can comfort you? The unbelieving, living and dying such, have no portion in the covenant of grace. If you believe not, you must perish. The promise is given to obedient faith only; "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." If this day you become believers, you have, in that faith, the token and mark of the divine choice and you assuredly belong to the Israel of God! Every heavenly blessing which God promises to Israel belongs to you who are in Christ Jesus and so are in union with the promised seed.

Coming to our text, I shall ask you, first, to *listen to the Lord's declaration of His own name*; "I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." When you have carefully listened to that solemn name and learned something from it, then I will ask you to *note the Lord's estimate of His people*. What does He think of them? What price does He set upon them? "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." When we have wondered a while at this, we shall briefly *consider the outcome of this very wonderful statement of God's value of His people*. They are precious in His sight, and He loves them, and therefore He will withhold no good thing from them.

I. First, I pray you, LISTEN TO THE LORD'S DECLARATION OF HIS OWN NAME. May the Holy Spirit open our ears to hear to profit! He says, "I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." He gives His name thus at large to distinguish Himself from the false gods. Other things there were, which men called gods and these had names, though, indeed, they had no being, but were the creatures of man's imagination and fear. God, the living God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, sets forth His own name and title that there may be no mistake as to who He is. "I am the LORD," He says, "and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to engraved images." He also sets forth His name at large, for the comfort of His people. Is it not written, "They that know Your name well put their trust in You"? There is something in every name of God which may breed faith in our souls. Whether we know Him as Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, or Lord, or by whatever other name He has been pleased to manifest Himself, that title becomes the ground of our confidence and is the means of fostering faith in His people's minds, when they come to understand its meaning. To a trembling people the Lord enlarges on His wonderful names. I think He also does it to excite our wonder and our gratitude. He that loves us so much is Jehovah; He that can create and destroy; He that is the self-existent God! He, even He, has set His heart upon His people and loves them and counts them precious in His sight! It is a marvelous thing! The more one thinks of it, the more shall we be overwhelmed with astonishment that He who is everything should love us who are less than nothing! It is the Holy One who has deigned to choose and to love unholy men; and to look upon them in divine grace; and save them from their sins. That you may bow low in loving gratitude, God lets you see who He is. That you may see how great a stoop of condescension He has made when He loves His unworthy people and takes them into union with Himself, you are made to see how great and glorious is the divine name.

Let us devoutly think of each of these names separately. First, the Lord speaks of Himself as "*Jehovah, your God*." I need not tell you that where you see LORD in capitals, it should be Jehovah.

Jehovah; "the God of the whole earth shall He be called." His kingdom rules over all; there is *universality*. But He calls Himself, "Your God"; there is *specialty*. The goodness of God surrounds all the creatures He has made, but there is a love which is peculiar to His own. To all the nations of the earth He was the one only LORD and God, but yet He said of Israel, "You only have I known, of all the families of the earth." Limit not the benevolence of God but, at the same time, do not deny the specialty of His love to His people. Wide is the circumference of mercy, but the chosen dwell in the innermost center of His love. Thus, the one ever-glorious Jehovah, while He is God unto the ends of the earth, is Israel's God in a sense in which He is not the God of Assyria, or Persia, or Egypt, or Ethiopia. He has made Himself over to His own chosen people, saying, "I will be their God."

Jehovah, the glorious I AM, signifies self-existence. He borrows nothing from others. Indeed, in a sense, there are no others apart from Him since all live by His permit and power. He is as complete without His creatures as with them. When there were no heavens, no earth, no twinkling star nor flying seraph, He was as truly God and as complete within Himself as He is now that He has made innumerable creatures. Yet, though He is thus all-sufficient, self-sufficient and self-existent, He still deigns to link Himself with our nothingness and call Himself, "Jehovah, your God." The Self-existent gives His people existence and they exist that He may bless them and magnify the glory of His own existence in them! The Lord lives and we live in Him and by Him. In Jesus we hear God saying to us, "Because I live, you shall live, also." Oh, blessed union to God in Christ Jesus by which we are supplied with every good from the self-existent fountain of life and being!

Jehovah, again, is a name which means immutability. "I AM THAT I AM" was His name to Moses. God always is in the present. To Him there is no past or future—

*"He fills His own eternal NOW,
And sees our ages past."*

This unchanging One here declares Himself to be the God of beings who are but of yesterday and full of change. Yes, great Lord, You were my God when first my pulse began to beat. You did care for me when I lay upon my mother's lap. You have watched over me when, in youthful days, I foolishly wandered. You have called me back and taught me to lay my finger in the print of my Savior's wounds and say, "My Lord, and my God." Yes, Jehovah has been our God; "The same yesterday, today and forever." He never changes nor ceases as to His love to us. He cannot love us more; He will not love us less. Without "variableness or shadow of turning" is Jehovah in His relation to those whom He has called into His favor.

Furthermore, Jehovah means sovereignty. "Jehovah reigns, let the people tremble." His is a name of lofty royalty, for, "Jehovah is a great God and a great King above all gods." He exercises the absolute prerogative and "does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." He gives no account of His matters. As the potter, He disposes of the clay at His own pleasure. Yet, stooping from His boundless sovereignty and freedom, our Lord binds Himself to His own people by bonds of covenant pledge and promise. He says, "I am Jehovah, your God." He is our God, ready to hear our prayers, prompt to help our needs, held by His own oath and promise to be the guardian and helper of His people. I do not know how to admire enough these words of title, so glorious and so gracious; so high above us and yet so near to us; "JEHOVAH, your God!" Here is matter of thought and motive for love.

Now comes a second combination of titles; "*The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*" It may not have struck you before, but what a New Testament combination this is; "The Holy One, your Savior"! It reminds us of the words; "Just, and the justifier of him that believes." Here we have one so holy as to be separate from sinners and yet the Savior of sinners! "Holy, Holy, Holy," is the ascription which is justly due to Him and yet He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. "The Holy One of Israel, your Savior." It is a commingling of attributes which only the cross can explain. Herein is a world of comfort! God's holiness appears to look dark and black upon a sinner, but when he believes in Jesus this attribute of holiness smiles upon him! Is God holy? Then He will never break His promise! If He declares men to be justified through faith in Christ, then depend upon it, they are justified! He will not run back from the compact of His grace. Having exacted at the hand of our great Surety that which vindicates His justice, He makes that justice the guarantee that He will no more be angry with His people. There is a substantial truth in those lines of our hymn—

*"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."*

We can now appeal to the holiness of God and expect that having accepted a sacrifice on our behalf, He will graciously pass by our sins. His holiness forbids that He should declare the death of His Only-Begotten to be a failure by punishing those for whom Jesus was an accepted sacrifice. The Lord has made to meet on His beloved Son the iniquity of us all; how, then, shall it be laid at our door? "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree"; and to what end did He bear them if we, also, shall endure their penalty? If by faith the substitution of Christ is made ours; and God declares that it is so; then how shall we be condemned who have accepted His sacrifice? Am I not forgiven if I have died in Christ and am raised in Him to newness of life? The very holiness of God makes us rejoice, for it is enlisted on our side and assures us of salvation! Delightful title! "The Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

No doctrine has more often filled my mind with adoration than this; that God is as holy in the pardon of sin as He is in the punishment of it; that if He had sent the whole race of guilty men to hell, He would not have been more just than He is now in the pardon of those who, by faith, are in Christ Jesus and who, in Him, were made to die unto sin. "The Holy One of Israel, your Savior." The holiness of divine grace makes salvation 10,000 times more precious than if it had been an arbitrary act of the divine sovereignty. Had it been possible for God to set aside the claims of His justice and simply to forgive without making satisfaction to His law, we should have felt our standing to be questionable. Unjustly saved! Poor position for one who has a conscience! But instead of that, the Lord is supremely just and not even to be gracious will He abdicate the judgment throne. His justice shines out as clear and bright as the fair light of His mercy. When I behold the Son of God at Calvary, what do I see? Which is most conspicuous, at the cross; justice or grace? Truly, I see grace in the gift of Jesus, but I see as plainly

justice that made Jehovah bruise His Son and put Him to grief! It is a blessing to feel that our salvation rests upon the rock of divine holiness, quite as surely as upon the basis of divine love. Treasure up those names, "The Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Since "The Holy One of Israel" is our Savior, we are confident that He will save us from all sin! He has saved us from the penalty and the defilement of sin; He will also save us from the disease of sin; that is to say, our tendency to evil. "They shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." The Lord will save believers from all inclination to evil. We shall be saved not only from sins committed, but from indwelling sin, from original sin, from the corrupt tendencies of our nature. "The Holy One of Israel, your Savior," will save us until we become holy as God is holy; or, as our Lord Jesus worded it, "Perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." My brothers and sisters, aspire to this salvation! Let this blessed name of God, "the Holy One of Israel, your Savior," encourage you to believe that you shall yet be without spot, or wrinkle, or any evil thing. Into heaven there shall in no way enter anything that defiles and you shall be pure as God Himself—

*"O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God;
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul."*

I beg you to reflect upon the fact that the glorious Lord; who here styles Himself, "Jehovah, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior," the Creator of all things and their Preserver; is come very near to you. In the next verse He says, "Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable, and I have loved you." Mark, "I have loved you." It is not enough that He thinks kindly and deals tenderly; He loves! He loves! This is an exceeding marvel.

You know, dear fathers, what it is to love your children. You know, dear women, what it is to love your husbands. These loves are faint shadows of the love of God to His chosen! Sweet is the love which unites us to each other, but it is wonderful that God Himself should say, "I have loved you." It makes my heart beat quick to think that I am the object of Jehovah's love!

Remember, also, that this Holy Lord is working upon you still, that you may reflect His glory. He says in the seventh verse, "I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him." He has begun our new creation. He is carrying it on and He is completing it. There is a new character forming in believers by God's own hand; a character which will be the image of the Lord Jesus! We are the handiwork of God, His higher creation, the product of His eternal power. No, we are more; it is written, "Of His own will He begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." We are begotten again unto a lively hope and the life will never die, neither will the hope be frustrated, for the Lord has fixed His strong resolves to perfect His work in us. What does He say in the 13th verse? "There is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall reverse it?" Jehovah is fashioning us in the image of His Son, and who shall hinder Him? Who shall stand in God's way? If I am a believer, despite depravities of nature, temptations from the world, and assaults from Satan, I must be, I *shall* be perfectly transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus, and in me shall the promise of verse 21 be absolutely fulfilled; "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise."

II. Secondly, LET US NOTE THE LORD'S ESTIMATE OF HIS PEOPLE. Whatever *we* may think of the Israel of God, the Lord thinks more of it than words can express. He says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." Let us turn that over in our minds. When the Lord chose a nation to be the depository of His sacred oracles, He might have selected Egypt if He had willed to do so. Egypt was in the known world the oldest nation. It was hoary with antiquity. Egypt contained the wisest and most civilized people of early times. Its very ruins are the wonder of the ages. Its records show an extraordinary progress in literature, architecture and the arts and sciences. Egypt was also the most powerful of empires in the olden times. Before the banners of Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia came to the front, the dragon of Egypt was a mighty ensign. Yet the Lord did not choose the sons of Ham, but passed by Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba. The Lord chose the seed of Abraham and the family of Jacob; He multiplied them and instructed them; and made them to be His own peculiar people. In this sense He could say, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."

In the course of history the claims of various countries came into collision with those of Israel. Especially Egypt proudly oppressed Israel. What did God do? Did He hesitate as to which of the two

peoples should be preserved? No. The Lord brought out Israel and turned His artillery upon Egypt. That His people might be free, He hurled plagues upon Pharaoh until at last He killed all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength. In this way He gave Egypt for the ransom of His people. He brought Israel forth and when the proud Egyptians pursued them and overtook them by the Red Sea, the Lord destroyed the chariot and the horse; the army and the power; and again gave Egypt as the ransom of His elect nation. In the days of King Asa the Ethiopians came up against Judah to the number of a million of men; but "they were destroyed before the Lord and before His host"; thus was Ethiopia given for Israel. Nebuchadnezzar came up against the land and struck Egypt sorely, as it was foretold by Ezekiel the prophet. "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: therefore thus says the Lord God; behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor wherewith he served against it, because they worked for Me, says the Lord God."

Then was the crocodile broken by the river and its power was never restored. Probably the full meaning of the text must be found in the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. It was written of Cyrus, "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, says the Lord of hosts." Accordingly, Cyrus did cause the people to return to their land and then the Lord promised him Egypt as his reward. See Isaiah 45:14: "Thus says the Lord, the labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come after you; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you, saying, Surely God is in you; and there is none else, those is no other God," Cambyses conquered Egypt and destroyed many of its cities, and never since has there been a native prince sitting upon the throne of Pharaoh. God gave to the king of Persia, Egypt and the neighboring regions as the ransom price of His people.

Thus the Lord did of old on the behalf of His literal Israel. And what does this fact say to us? It means this; God's chosen are immeasurably precious in His sight! He chose them to be His people before all worlds out of mere love; and in this ancient love He will abide world without end. Long before we were born we were thought of by the Lord; our names were in His book and our persons lay on His heart from before the foundations of the world. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." He ordained the chosen ones to be what they were, not in themselves. They were not holy, but He ordained them that they should be holy. He chose them that He might make them like His dear Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. These chosen men are the center of God's plan and design. If I understand God's great project, it was on this wise; He had formed matter into a thousand marvelous shapes and He had then created vegetable life in infinite variety and beauty. To this He had added animal life in its differing degrees of intelligence and then He made angels, who are pure spirit. These several creations He would link together, blending matter and mind, the animal and the spiritual; therefore He resolved that He would make a being that should be nearer to Him than the angels and yet should be akin to the rest of the universe; down even to the mere materialism of which its body should be composed. His Son was in His thought! Immanuel, God-With-Man. He resolved that the eternal Son should be incarnate, should be the Adam of a chosen race, "the first-born among many brethren," and that these brethren should be His Son's joy and crown and delight forever. The word made flesh was to be the model and pattern for a generation of beloved ones who should be "a kind of first fruits of His creatures." These favored beings would be of earth and yet of heaven; brothers to the worm and yet partakers of the divine nature; lifted up into alliance with the Godhead through Jesus Christ, their Representative, who is both God and Man.

This wonderful conception I can but dimly set before you. Man was so surely to be made in the imago of God that he should never again lose that image. The chosen were to be placed beyond further danger of falling because they would know sin and hate it intensely because of their experience of it and salvation from it. By His gracious redemption, the Lord purposed to produce beings that would be forever loyal to their great King, not through force, but through their new nature and the constraint of

love to Him who redeemed them from evil. Perhaps it would not have been possible, by a mere fiat, to have created free agents who would be safe in the surpassing elevation of sons of God. Before they could be able to stand near to the eternal throne, related to the eternal God, they must be knit to Jesus by eternal bonds of love. They must be so bound by grateful love that there shall be no possibility of their imitating Satan in proud rebellion. By the operations of His grace, the Lord has prepared a creature who is able humbly to enjoy the favor of heaven and safely to occupy a rank to which angels cannot aspire. A creature, however wisely made, might become self-sufficient and disobedient; but a creature that has fallen, that has been condemned; and then has been redeemed by God Himself assuming its nature, redeemed by blood, lifted up by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit into newness of life and so made akin to God; that creature, I say, is thus prepared to live near the eternal throne and to bear the dignity of a child of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ!

God's intent was to produce a race that should be honorable in His sight and well-beloved of His soul. That being His eternal purpose, He firmly fixed His soul upon the accomplishment of it. He would glorify Himself in these people. "This people have I formed for Myself: they shall show forth My praise." Did not the world show forth His praise? Yes, in a measure the spacious earth and swelling flood proclaim the wise and powerful God. But He meant to make men far clearer mirrors of His glory. In them He would be seen through all the ages! Their lives should show forth His longsuffering, His grace, His love, His wisdom, His holiness and His whole character. In redeeming them with His own blood, He would set forth in them His justice and His grace. These were to be repetitions of the image of the Only-Begotten in whom God is well-pleased. God so loved His Son that He would see His beauties reflected in others; He, the Son of God, should stand surrounded with brothers and sisters who would rejoice to honor Him! It was a God-like idea! God determined that in saving men He would show forth all the glory of His nature.

This design would be costly, even to Jehovah Himself. To carry out this purpose, men, having fallen, must be redeemed by blood. The Lord gave Ethiopia and Seba for His people, but this was little. Would He give His only-begotten Son? The ever-blessed Son of the Father was more precious than Egypt multiplied beyond all count; and Ethiopia and Seba were as nothing to His value. Would the Lord give His own Son? Yes, to carry out His divine resolve of magnifying Himself in the salvation of guilty men, He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! O miracle of miracles! Love beyond degree!

But even then men could not be saved unless the Holy Spirit, another blessed person of the divine Three, should condescend to come and live in their bodies! It was great for Jesus to come and live in human flesh for 30 years, but for the Holy Spirit to abide in our human nature for *thousands* of years is an equal marvel! Yes, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is true. This further miracle of love has been perfected in us in whom the Spirit abides. This is far more than giving Egypt for our ransom. God gives Himself to save unworthy man!

And now, beloved, shall He not, with the Lord Jesus, also give us all things? Is anything, now, too dear for God to make a sacrifice of it? Is there anything in heaven or earth, or even within the sphere of *imagination*, that God would not give for the accomplishment of purposes of divine grace to His people? Believers, do you know how great you are? Do you know, O men and women saved by grace, *what* you are and where you are? If you did, I think you would begin to shout, "Hallelujah!" and would never come to an end. You are blood-redeemed and bought by your Lord with a price. You are the jewels of Jesus' crown, the gems within His breastplate. You are molded by His hands to be likenesses of Himself. You are set over the works of God's hands and made princes of the royal blood of the universe. Do you know what it means to be called sons of God? Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God! You are joint heirs with Christ; do you comprehend that? The Lord Jesus has made us kings and priests unto our God and we shall reign forever and ever! Oh, the splendors, the infinite splendors of the love of God to His believing people!

From now on everything shall be sacrificed for us. God will give all that He has to save His beloved ones! He will make the whole of nature and providence subservient to the complete salvation of His chosen. Kings shall be born and buried. Empires shall rise and fall. Republics and systems shall come and go; and all shall be the scaffold for the building of the house of God which is His church! All events shall work for the good of the chosen! It is God's grandest, highest purpose to gather together in one the

whole company of His redeemed in Christ Jesus their Lord and to make them like their head! O beloved, I know not how to preach! I want to sit and in silent wonder offer to the Lord the praise of my heart. Glorify God, I pray you, for He has glorified *you*!

III. And now we shall close with a brief meditation. LET US CONSIDER THE OUTCOME OF THIS.

If it is so, that the glorious God has really and of a truth loved us, His people, and valued us at a mighty price, then see *how secure His people are!* I will not say anything upon this topic, but the Lord Himself shall speak. "Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." He has given so much for us that He will not, now, lose us! He values us too highly to let His enemy carry us away! beloved, see how secure they must be who are priceless in the esteem of God!

Note, next, *the honor which God puts upon them.* It follows upon the text, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." God has put us poor sinners among His honorable ones. I know one, who, in her unconverted state, had fallen into sad sin and the remembrance of it was painful. But the Lord removed the shame by laying home to her soul these gracious words, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." Oh, yes, the woman, who was a sinner, who washed our Savior's feet with tears and wiped them with her hair, was honorable to her Lord! The thief on the cross, hanging though he was, was honorable before Him who is the fountain of honor! He was a peer of the realm and went in with Jesus into the Palace, for his Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in paradise." Our ascending Lord entered paradise with this thief as His attendant! The Lord has a way of transforming dishonorable ones into honorable ones. He lifts us from the dunghill and sets us among princes, even the princes of His people. His own dear word says to us, "Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable, and I have loved you; therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life."

Again, from the high estimate which the Lord puts upon His people we conclude *the certainty of the Lord's gathering together all His people.* This is set forth from the fifth to the seventh verses, "I will bring your seed from the east, and gather them from the west," and so forth. This encourages me to preach with all my might, for the Lord has a people whom He *must* and *will* gather to Himself! He bids the nations act as His servants in this matter. "I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth." Why, they may be up to their necks in the bogs of sin! But they are to be brought home, for the Lord will not lose His sons and daughters! Perhaps they have wandered far into grievous vices; but if they are called by His name, every one of them must come. Yes, it is written, "even every one." Our almighty Savior can draw a sinner back from the shelving brink of hell. While there is life there is hope! God will bring back His redeemed in spite of whatever iniquity they may have fallen. Victorious grace shall set free the captives of sin! As to free will, the Lord will make His people willing in the day of His power. On the cross, according to Psalm 22, our Lord said, "A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come." "Shall come"; shall make them come; and the Lord Jesus shall not shed His blood in vain. The Lord gave Egypt for Israel's ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for her and He will not lose what He has purchased at such a price. Whether the exile has been carried west, or east, or north, or south, the Lord will devise means that he is not left to perish in the far-off land. When I come to preach in this great house, I say within my heart, "Lord, You have many people in this city. I will look for them. This people You have bought for Yourself at an exceedingly great price and I desire to find them for You." A controversialist once said, "If I thought God had a chosen people, I should not preach." That is the very reason why I *do* preach. What would make *him* inactive is the mainspring of *my* earnestness! If the Lord had not a people to be saved, I should have little to cheer me in my ministry. Other sheep He has whom He must bring in and my hope is that He will bring some of them in by me! Beloved, God has a people everywhere and we are sent to draw them to Him with the powerful magnet of the cross. This finds them out amid the ashes, even as Jesus said; "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

We preach Christ crucified and, “to Him shall the gathering of the people be.” The Lord calls to Himself His own sheep and these follow Him and are saved.

Here is another little bit for meditation. If God has determined to glorify Himself by us and in us, *let us be in one accord with Him*. Already I have quoted the 21st verse; “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.” beloved, let us labor to show forth His praise, for He has formed us for that purpose! Oh, that we could live wholly to His glory! Not only let us speak *sometimes* to His praise, but let us *always* be making known the exceeding riches of His divine grace! Do you not feel, beloved, that if God has chosen you for such an end as this, your whole being cries, “I must and will show forth His praise. My soul does magnify the Lord”? If we knew how much God loved us, we should love Him much more in return and we should give much more to His cause and to His poor than we do. Just now I have need of large help in money for repairs at the Tabernacle; and this need would not arise if we were all consecrated as we ought to be. As it has arisen, we shall soon meet the need if we all used our substance for the Lord. It is not my work any more than it is yours, but I have the responsibility for it and I would be glad to be helped. We are stewards and not owners; the least hint should set us inquiring as to what is needed in our Master's house. We should not need exhorting, much less to be begged of; we should always be crying to the Lord, “Show me what You would have me to do.” He is Jehovah our God, the Holy One of Israel who has redeemed us at a measureless price; the very least we can do is, by holy loving, cheerful working, patient suffering and spontaneous giving; show what we think of our Lord. Ah, if we live near to God, we shall not long for the silly amusements which are beguiling the base-born professors of this evil age. Think of a joint heir with Christ at the theater! The very thought of consorting with the world is degradation! We are born of a nobler birth and lifted to a higher level than to grovel in childish, stupid play. If we are the sons of Jehovah, our joy, our hope, our recreation, our object in life will all be among high and eternal things! Our affections are set upon things above, not on things on the earth. Try to live up to your destiny, you heirs of God! May God the Holy Spirit help you!

What love we ought to bear to God! Does God give up Egypt for us and shall we not give up the riches of Egypt for Him? Shall we go down to Egypt for help when God has already given up Egypt that He might help us? If we could have all the wealth of Ethiopia and Seba, what would it be in comparison with our Lord? Therefore, let us love Him supremely and count all things but loss for the excellence of His knowledge. Beloved, we must love Him; we do love Him. How can it be otherwise? “The love of Christ constrains us.” Madame Guyon wrote of “torrents.” Divine love, if truly felt, is a torrent sweeping all before it, like that ancient river Kishon. Oh, for those torrents now!

May God the Holy Spirit bless these feeble words of mine to all His people and may many long to be joined with His people by faith in Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 43.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—192, 730, 733.

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